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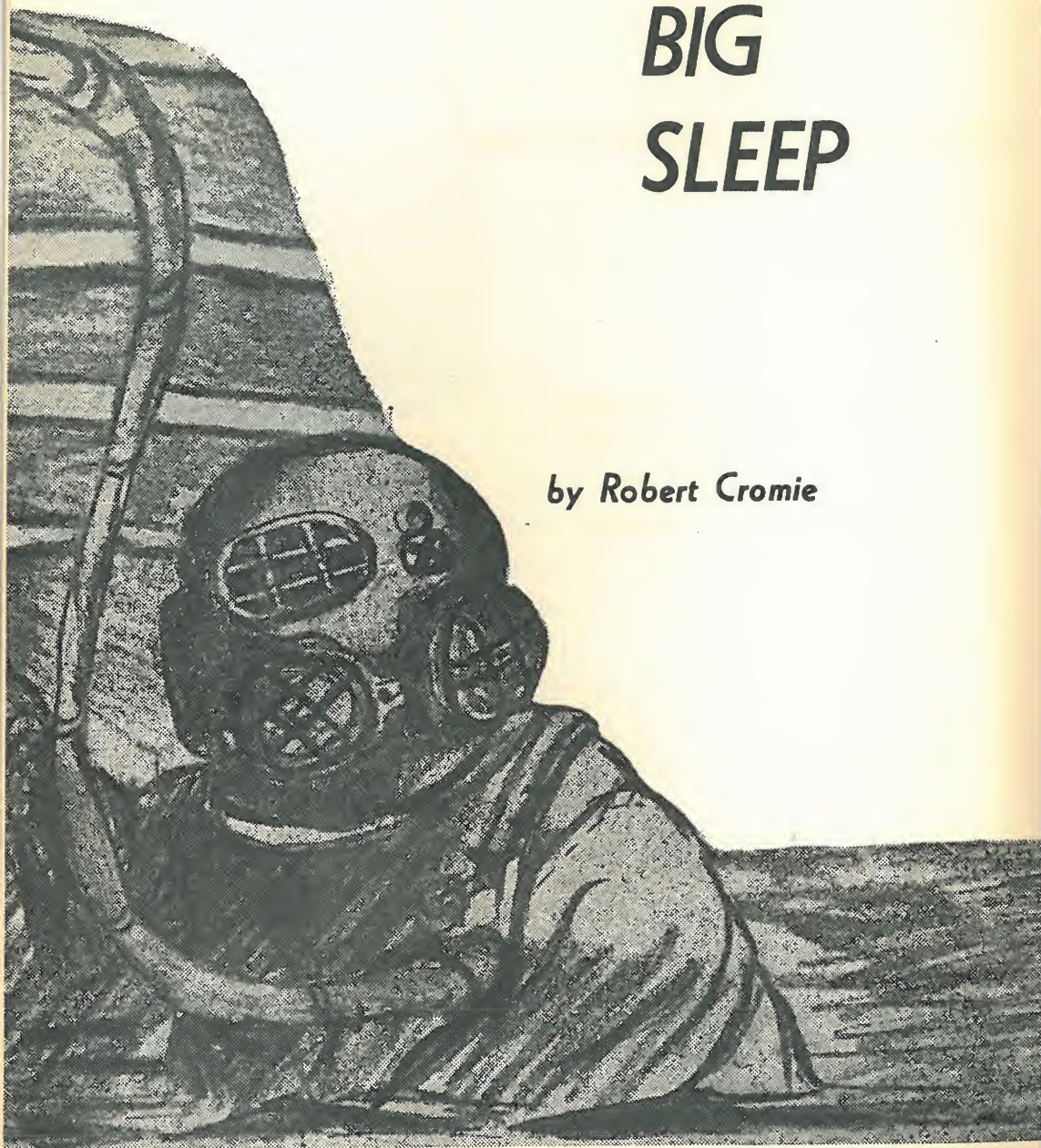
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# THE BIG SLEEP

*by Robert Cromie*



LINK Wetzel crossed the dock in slow erratic steps and started up the gangplank leading to the whitelined little schooner setting squarely in the murky water. As he dragged his feet over the hawser, his left foot caught the rope and he pitched forward heavily. A desperate grab for the rail caused only further momentum and he hit the boards with a wet slap. For a few seconds Link had no thought of returning to his feet. The watersoaked planks soothed his hot mouth and beat the fog back from his haggard brain.

"What's the matter, Wetzel? You tired?" The low husky voice was flooded with sarcasm.

Link stumbled erect and climbed unsteadily for the deck. "Nah, I'm bouncing with energy." He mumbled the words like a drunk recovering from a bout with the whiskey glass.

"Funny boy! What's the matter? You have a bad night?" The other man looked closely at Link's bleary eyes.

"Yeah, I was up all night; didn't sleep hardly at all." This statement was close enough to the truth, so Link refrained from pressing his explanation further. He felt no inclination to tell this man, Prentice Murray, just why he hadn't slept. Prince, as Murray was known on the docks, didn't care for hard liquor, at least in the huge quantities that Link was accustomed to take. No, Link

wasn't inclined to reveal to his employer that he had been drinking all night and into the small hours of the morning and that he had deliberately disobeyed Prince's command for plenty of rest. Murray was firm with his divers on such points; he was noted for that. Link realized, of course, his profession called for strenuous endurance, sometimes to the breaking point. Occasionally he had come up from an aqualung dive in almost complete physical exhaustion, too tired to do anything but sleep. So it was with good reason that the boss forbade liquor and late hours. Both were incompatible with the diving profession. But Link never worried about that.

"A little weak around the gills, I think. You better not go down today. I'll take Rene."

As Prince turned and stalked away, Wetzel leaned over the rail. He felt very relieved. The boss was a hard driver. He never put up with divers who quietly forgot his orders in a corner tavern, and those who did he quickly severed from the payroll. Link might have now been walking across the dock without a job, if Prince had been at all suspicious. Everything was Johnny now though; there was no reason for alarm. Today he could sit on the pleasant deck under the warm sun, waiting for the two other divers to surface. He had no real love for the cold water anyway,



and taking measurements of underwater terrain for the Under-seas Research group was not exactly his idea of excitement. The day looked pleasant, the sun was warm on his two-day beard, the deck even looked comfortable, and he was tired . . .

BY 9:30 a. m. the little schooner with its three passengers was cutting the water of Port-de-Bouc, trailed by ever widening crests of sparkling white water. On board Rene Lemangeur lolled at the wheel, while Prince Murray checked the diving equipment. Sitting against the cabin in the sun's morning glare, Link let the heavy rope slip through his capable fingers. He noted the strength of the line; the coarse fiber would take a terrific strain. It would proba . . . For a moment his head dropped and his thoughts passed close to oblivion. With an effort he fought the benumbing stupor and opened his eyes wide. Rene stood expectantly over the wheel looking across the expanse of placid water.

"M'sieur Prince, I see the buoy. We should be there in ten minutes."

"Okay Rene, where's Wetzel?" Murray did not look up from his examinations.

"Right here," Link answered, "checking the line."

"How is it?"

"All right, except that it's wet. Should've been dried out yesterday."

"Any faulty spots in it?"

"Nah, seems in shape."

"What's botherin' him?" Link thought to himself. "Must be afraid of losing something." He looked at the water. Its azure tint accentuated the sparkling white tips of countless waves. It slipped by the boat like some great blue mirror, calm yet reminding him somehow of a strong current slipping swiftly silently by. The color hypnotized him as it always did. Gradually the picture lost focus and only a great mass of blue remained before him.

"You take care of the lines today, Link. You look kind'a frayed under the eyeballs." Murray made the remark as he stood and surveyed his drowsy lieutenant.

"Yeah, you told me once. You gonna take the big camera or otherwise?"

"Probably the big one today."

"Okay, I'll hook it on the line."

While Prince dressed for the dive, Link moved the coils of rope to one side of the boat. After attaching the camera to the end of the line, he then removed the drum of the windlass, slipped it through the two big coils, and grunting heavily, returned the cylinder to its proper sockets. This done, he relieved Rene at the wheel to allow the six foot Gascon time to dress for the descent.

Fifteen minutes later the two divers stood on the deck of the anchored schooner making last

minute preparations. Link stood near the windlass listening idly.

"We'll go to no more than 180 feet today but be careful. As soon as you feel any dizziness, surface. I don't want a silly-header diver on my hands. And look, Rene, we have to photograph at least a hundred feet of the shelf today, so keep steppin'." Rene listened to Murray stolidly but intently.

"He's still green at this," Link noted to himself. "He'll have to watch himself."

"Wetzel, you know the signals; keep your eyes open." Murray turned and motioned to Rene, "We're off."

The two men climbed into the water. Rene already had the mask over his face. He peered up at Link with a pinched expression from the tight-fitting face guard. Murray, however, clung to the ladder to give Link one final instruction.

"Let the line down slow at first. We'll take it after the first fifty feet."

Link nodded, "Okay, take it easy."

A splash, a flurry of kicks, and the divers were gone. Link moved to the windlass and opened the cylinder lock. Foot after foot of line slipped from drum to water, at first quickly but gradually more slowly as the water-tight camera built up resistance in its descent. In obedience to Prince's injunction that he hold the camera back, Link slowed the drum

down until he judged the camera had passed the fifty-foot mark.

"They ought to have it towed by now," he mused. "No use me holdin' it back." He turned to step back. A sudden wave of drowsiness enveloped him and his eyes, forced to remain active until now, felt tired and heavy. Weariness shuddered through his whole body. Over against the cabin wall were coils of rope. He stumbled towards them fighting the fog from his mind.

"What'd Murray say to me before he left? What the hell! Somethin' about the rope. Oh yeah, yeah, the signals. He told me to watch for signals. What the hell are they now? Oh yeah, now I got 'em—one jerk for more line, two to pull in, and three to pull in fast. Got'ta watch that rope. He'll probably send me one pretty soon."

Link leaned back against the wall. The sun's warmth penetrated his clothes and his body felt the heat. First his feet, then his thighs, and then his chest experienced a delicious sense of heat. Link's head rolled, stopped, and slipped lower on his chest. His body slid to the deck floor, his head pillowed on the pile of ropes. Link slept.

ONE hundred and seventy feet below the surface, Prentice Murray and Rene Lemangeur worked quickly and surely. The camera clicked repeatedly as the men filmed the shelf wall, a var-



iety of plants, and once in a great while some roamer of the deep they had never run across before. Murray was quite experienced in the aqualung technique. He had dived all over the world with different organizations and had met many of the underwater dangers known to man. Gold, the bends, man-eating fish, the rapture of the deep, he had met them all. With such experience the Prince was regarded by the sailors of Port-de-Bouc with fascination. Many belived him absolutely fearless. Half the time Murray believed it himself, but on this trip for some reason or another he felt insecure. Perhaps Rene was the cause; he was still green, not yet a smooth working partner.

Prince glanced down to the spot where he had last seen Rene. Only a dark blur continuing for some distance could he see.

"That's funny," he thought, "maybe I'd better look for him."

His powerful strokes took him down to the 180 foot level. Rene wasn't in sight. On the left the shelf loomed over him, its massive face covered with growth. Rene probably wasn't along the wall; he must be deeper. The thought rushed through his brain. Guilt siezed him.

"Damn it, why didn't I keep my eye on him?" He muttered to the silent water but only silence answered him. A sudden surge of panic swept over him.

"He's got to be around. That crazy dodo might really go nuts."

If the raptures did get Rene . . . Murray tried to erase the thought from his mind. Intense happiness would be a first symptom, resulting in the kid's taking his mask off. Or he might become very tired first and lie down someplace where he would never be found. Prince kept thinking all this as he plunged downward. 185, 190, 200 feet and then, he saw him. Abruptly he turned to the right where a shadowy form floated in the water. Rene!! And he still had his mask on! Murray wanted to hug the other man. A feeling of peace and happiness pervaded his whole system. A drink of water would taste good now. He'd just take off his mask and . . .

Prince shuddered. He had had this feeling of a joyful thirst before—rapture of the deep! He had to get Rene and beat it. Even now he could sense his body becoming slowly irresistably weak. He wanted to sit down to rest from the load on his back and refresh his legs. No, no, he couldn't let that feeling conquer him; there had to be a way out. It was death if he stayed here!

Prince took a good hold on Rene's chest. He was thinking quickly, desperately of how to get himself and the silent diver beside him out of this mess. Swimming out to the top was impossible, since he was so weak.

But there had to be some way! His brain refused to work under the opium-like effects of the rapture.

"What would Link do? What would Link do?" The name kept recurring in his drowsy mind. Link? Where was he? Yeah, that's right, in the boat manning the rope. The rope! Sure, the rope! That's what he needed. Perhaps it had sunk to the 200 foot level when he had left it to look for Rene. It had to be around someplace. Anywhere! Just as long as he could find it in time!

Aw hell, he was too tired to find the rope. It was peaceful down here; the water felt fine and he was happy. That poor fish isn't happy though. He looks kind'a waterlogged. He'd just give it his air mask, so the poor fish could breathe.

"It's gettin' me," Prince thought to himself. "The line,

I've got to find it." Moments later he saw it quite unexpectedly, a long black line against the dark blue of the surrounding water. It billowed gently back and forth, as though moved by an invisible hand. As Prince reached the rope, a surge of giddyness, horrible and full of death, clutched at his senses. Grasping it, he pulled, once, twice, three times! There was no answer. Again he pulled. Again it went unheeded. Laughingly the diver clawed at his mask!

ON board ship two hundred feet above, Link Wetzel lay on the deck in the glaring sunlight, his head pillowed by the coils of rope. At shipside the rope suddenly cracked against the windlass, once, twice, and once again. The sleeper stirred, moaned, and lay still.

*Pursley Award Winner, 1954*

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You said, "Thanks, my dear,  
For the lovely time,

The flowers and the show."  
And you meant that "thanks";  
It was always there.

That's sweet of you, I know.  
But I wonder why,  
You must thank me for  
The little things I do,  
When these fewer words  
Would mean so much more . . .

Just, "Thanks for being YOU."

—JAMES J. PLATE



# HOME

We were leaving for home, and I was not enthusiastic; two years had passed, but I felt that some part of me would never leave this island that I had come to know and love. We were waiting on the dock and the sun glared down upon us as it had done so many days in the past. The persistent breeze riffled down the dock and danced across the lagoon, up the beach, and into the heart of the island. Many scenes and pleasant memories from the past two years came to mind as I sat there on the dock waiting to board the ship.

Two years ago I had arrived as a member of a Navy detachment. We were to spend six months on the island to repair the native hospital. The time had slipped past with week and month drifting silently by until now, two years had passed, and we were recalled. In my ignorance, those first few weeks had seemed terrible. I had spent my spare time during those weeks in trying to bring the outside world into this place.

My first evening in the village two years ago was very disappointing. Ten small frame buildings that were facing onto the

main road were no comparison to the modern, neon-lighted, night clubs bedecking our main streets at home. The huge thick-trunked breadfruit trees, which were seen in the yards and along the street, gave the impression of a lonely country road. Many dogs, chickens, and children ran in and out of the houses and through the streets, stirring up the peaceful dust. Three of the stores had juke-boxes, old records, and a stock of warm beer. There was one store operated by an old Japanese lady where we could buy *suki yaki* and ham and eggs. This small peaceful village was a far cry from the glamor of the cities of the States.

It was only when this continual comparison between home and the island ceased that my eyes were opened to the peaceful beauty of the place. It took three months for me to awaken to the charm of the island. The first month of evenings that we spent in the village amounted to nothing more than drinking a few beers and a lot of conversation about our misfortune in being left in a place like this. One evening, the owner of a tavern pulled out a checker board from under the counter and asked me if I would play a game with him. He won ten games from me, but I had made a friend. Every eve-

by **Anthony Smith**



ning for the next month the storekeeper, Joe Pangellinan, and I played checkers and drank beer together. It was about five weeks after the first game that Joe asked me if I would come to his daughter's wedding. I accepted with gladness, for this would be a good chance to break the monotony.

I was nearing the church on the morning of the wedding when the bell began to ring, calling the people to the house of God. Why or how it happened I don't know, but I was struck with the beauty of the scene. Here on a small, insignificant, tropical island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean was a lone, beautiful bell, ringing out in the midst of a vast void giving praise to the Creator. I continued on to the church for the marriage and Mass. After Mass, Joe took me to his house for the party. All day and into the evening the party continued. There were games, music, and food; but more, there were people who lived and were happy here on an obscure island away from the essential civilization of the outside world. That day was the beginning of my awakening to the island.

After the wedding, Joe often invited me to his home, which was back in the village, where few of us sailors had ever been. The houses in the village were different from those at home, but the people that lived in them were the same as those who lived any-

where else on the earth.

The village presents a beautiful picture of peace and contentment. Upon entering the main road of the residential section a visitor passes an archway which has the village's name printed on it. Trees can be seen everywhere. Banana trees, breadfruit trees, papaya trees, and palm trees were so numerous that everywhere there was cast a rich, cool shade which enveloped the entire village.

The houses are built on poles and under most of them can be seen little children playing with their pet dogs or chickens. The laughter of those smiling children pervaded the entire place. The kitchens of the homes are in separate buildings behind the main houses. At all times of the day, you could smell the aroma of the cooking food. It seems as though the old women of the household spent the entire day shuffling between the houses and the cooking shacks. There was no such thing in the village as a central market place but rather separate little merchandise stores that blend with the homes. Here was a barber shop, down the block was a grocery store, and then a few doors down from it was a small building where meals, rice wine, and beer could be had. This general pattern was repeated about four times, and thus the entire village was served.

There was one central square

in the village, and this was marked by a large, covered bandstand made of concrete. Here is where the school children gave their recitals, where the local leaders gave political talks, where the young boys had boxing matches, where the elders would sit and talk over those never tiring topics that absorb elders throughout the world. It was here, around the bandstand, that the mothers would bring their young daughters when there were dances. The mothers would sit together around the edge of the square, while the band played quiet, lilt-ing tunes, and the laughing happy youth of a new generation danced around on the hard packed dirt of the square.

Across this same village square on feast days of the church were held processions which drew the whole population together, for they were one in faith. It is an awe-inspiring site to see one of these processions. A feast day is a holiday for all of the islanders, and all are represented in the processions. The young grade school girls, dressed in their white first Communion dresses, lead the column of worshippers. Their sparkling, black eyes shine forth with the innocence of the very young. Behind the girls of high school age, the young members of the village; then come the priests

carrying the Blessed Sacrament. Following the priests are the boys and men of the village. When the religious ceremonies are over, the people join together outside of the village for games and feasting until six o'clock, when the day is officially ended with vespers.

The peaceful quiet of the island is accentuated in the evenings when nothing can be heard but the soft murmur of the palms blending with the gentle rush of the waves as they break into a snowy crust against the coral reef. It was the quiet evenings that I would miss above all. Those walks along the beach where there were no false gods to distort the judgement, where the mind could rest and be content in the truth there was but one end for man in life.

It would be difficult to come to this island life and not be affected by the peace and freedom of the place. The cool peacefulness of the whispering palms, the quiet calmness of the shuffling old ladies, the love that was exemplified in the laughing happiness of the children; all of this had closed in about me and showed me a picture that came as near to perfect happiness as I had ever seen. Now I was leaving. Now I could only hope and pray that someday I would be able to return.



# *Vagabonds of the Nighttime*

Some deer there are in the meadow,  
Come with me and see,  
How deer do play in their leisure,  
Hurry, come with me!

We best had hurry through the sunlight,  
Hurry, come and see,  
These vagabonds of the nighttime  
Will not wait for thee.

And we shall watch from the thickets,  
Hurry come and see,  
The does and fawns at their playing,  
Will you follow me?

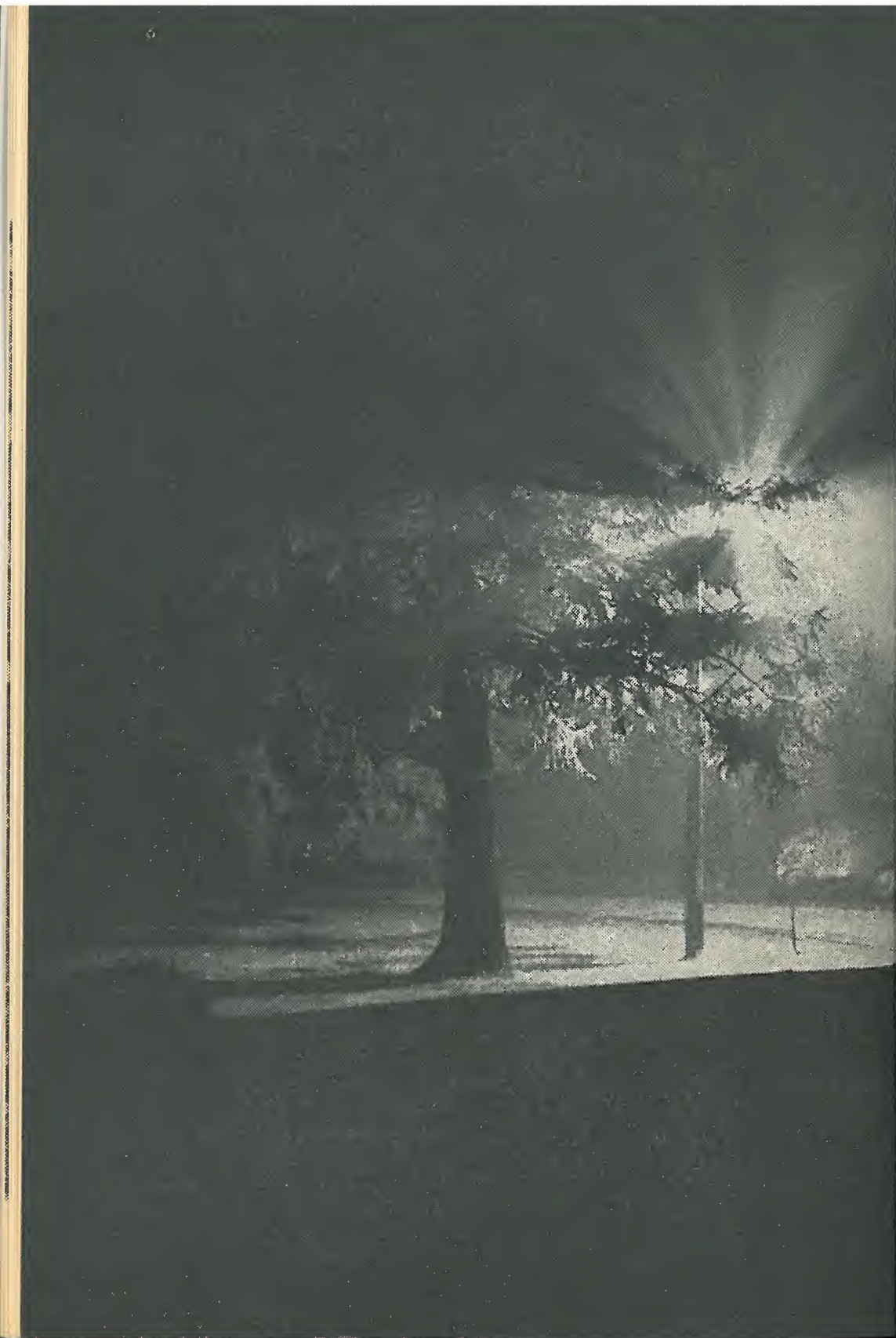
There was a buck with his family,  
Come with me and see,  
That shook his rack in the breezes,  
Hurry, come with me.

Oh, we shall watch 'till the twilight,  
Patient shall we be,  
But lest the deer take to fleeing,  
Hurry, follow me.

Then late come home in the evening,  
Happy shall we be,  
Yet vagabonds of the nighttime  
Need not wait for thee.

—DONALD L. MOORMAN





I remember that night so well, the eerie, frightful night that held in its hands the ultimate change in the course of my entire life. I can still hear the midnight bells sending their vibrating sounds through the dismal streets and waking the fathomless, unseen corners of the sleeping city. The

house, picked up the warped, rain-swollen newspaper and unlocked the large oaken door that had greeted me in a similar fashion for the last twenty years. I stripped myself of the wet, dripping clothes, settled back in my favorite chair, and began glancing over the day's news.

# WITNESS

unceasing rains had finally lessened their fall but they left behind them deep, torrid rivers and rapids filling the gutters and crevices of every street. As I slowly walked down the flooded sidewalk, I could hear these muddy waters, swirling and churning along their way allowing nothing to stop them. They moved along as miniature tidal waves, collecting millions of bits of minute residue and scouring the black stones of the aged street.

The city was now seemingly dead. After the bells had rocked their twelfth time, there was no living sound to be heard. Only the results of the torrental rain gave a slight movement to the morgue-like maze of thoroughfares.

I reached the stairway to my

It happened again! Another account of a futile attempt at the perfect crime was staring at me through the blotted print on the front page. "Why", I asked myself, "had it always failed? Why was it never successfully accomplished? Was there no man in all of history capable of devising a foolproof, faultless crime?" These were the questions, the confusing, disturbing questions that ran through my mind, searching in vain for a satisfactory answer. It was at that very moment that the thought first struck me. Of course! Why not me? Why couldn't I commit the perfect crime? Everyone else before me had failed, so why couldn't I succeed, using their mistakes as my solution? Who would ever suspect me?

I finished my last cigarette of the evening and fell asleep in the

by Frank Unger



chair as the intense rains again began to fall. It was the most violent, sleepless night of my life. I awoke, it seemed, every five minutes and each time with a new idea on how to conquer the barriers that lay before me. There must be no evidence whatsoever. I must carry it out on a person completely unknown to me and on one who didn't even know of my existence. How could I fail, no motive, no weapon, no evidence. It would be a success. I would accomplish the impossible. It would take hours, days, months of planning, but I would someday receive an infamy of recognition which no other man before me had ever achieved.

Six long months passed and my plan took shape. I had carefully studied ten different people and chosen the one whose daily life would fit perfectly into my plan. He was an elderly, grey-haired man, about 65 years old who owned a shoe repair shop only a mile from my home. Each day as I would ride past his store on the bus, I would glance in and see him working arduously over his ancient machines. I had walked this street on six different nights of the week and noticed that he would close his tiny establishment at the very same hour, 10:00 p. m. He would then walk about fifty feet to the alley, and pick up his car which he parked in the rear of the corner service station. The setting was

perfect.

The opposite side of this street was completely bare, except for the newsstand that stood on the far corner as a slowly deteriorating monument to its deceased proprietor. The other side was sparsely occupied by a meat market, antique shop, grocery store, and the old man's shoe repair shop. By ten o'clock every evening the entire block was desolate and completely evacuated. There was never a living soul to be seen or the slightest sound to be heard. Only the hobbling old man, locking his shop, coughing violently as he entered the night air, and slamming the door of his car, broke the stillness and deathly quiescence of the area. An artist could not have conceived more perfect surroundings or a more perfect spot for the crime. The base of my plan was now established. The only remaining link to be joined was the method. What could I use as a weapon, that left no trace of material evidence or fingerprints?

A hard, plastic letter opener was the answer to this problem. I could melt it down to an almost pure liquid state and there would be nothing remaining that could ever be held against me or used as evidence. I would remove it from the body and destroy it exactly as planned. I must now set the date for all of these preparations to reach their climax. January 18th, a Monday night



was the date I chose. It was at the beginning of the week and the streets would then be as deserted as they had ever been before. I had only two weeks left and the tension and suspense of that night were rapidly growing. In those two short weeks I mastered the entire plan to the precise second and found not the slightest indication of a mark to perfection or flaw to exactness. After twenty-six weeks of contriving, plotting, planning, and designing, the conception was about to be realized. The outline was to be completed, the final curtain drawn, and the dream accomplished. This was the night.

It had rained all day, and by late afternoon a deep mist hung over the drenched city. It seemed strange that on this night, the night of the satisfying of the craving desire, the heavens were again opening their hearts and weeping on the infinitesimal matter below them. I could not help recalling that first night I received the idea. It was an identical night, as terrifying and frightful as this one. It may have been the internal functioning of conscience or simply the approaching feeling of guilt on a proud, vainglorious individual, but I had the inconceivable sensation that these last seven months had never occurred. They seemed extremely vague and obscure in my clouded memory, but nevertheless, I knew they had be-

come history and the inevitable moment of the tired laborer receiving his reward had now arrived.

I ate not a solid ounce of food after six o'clock that evening. The mental strain now grew to an indescribable height of intensity. I walked slowly down the alley leading to the rear of the service station. It was now 9:25! A short thirty-five minutes ticked away their surviving seconds. I felt the sharp, jabbing point of the weapon in my pocket and a freezing chill of fear raced through my numb bones.

I began thinking, thinking of grotesque thoughts that had failed to enter my mind during the seven months of preparation. Was this actually me? Was this the John Brandon that had struggled all his life to reach the top of the ladder of success? Was this the John Brandon that held the position of Vice-President in the company in which he received his start in life? Was this the man who was willing to place all at stake merely to satisfy the craving for fame? It couldn't be! This man had always shirked all notions of crime and would never even entertain the slightest inclination of homicide. Yet, this was the same man and he was on the brink of committing one of the worst moral actions in the world, he was going to take another man's life. Yes, this was the same man.

It was now 9:35! The old man's car was in sight as I turned a slight bend in the alley and the rains fell harder than ever before. There were sharp bursts of thunder and at irregular intervals the divided universe was illuminated by enormous cracks of lightning.

I neared the corner and made a hesitant survey of the visible surroundings. Everything was as quiet and motionless as was expected. There was not a living soul to be seen in either direction. I reached his car and crouched down in its shadows. The minutes slowly passed and only six more remained until he would appear, walking around the abrupt corner. Five, four, three, two . . . they passed like seconds. It was ten o'clock. I waited! Where was he? Why had he not yet made his appearance.

Five minutes passed and still no sign of the victim. Wait! Was it he? Yes, I recognized the slight limp. He was no more than twenty feet away and walking towards me, his head down, attempting to avoid the huge droplets of rain. I drew the weapon and waited until he reached the handle of the front door on his car. I stepped from my place of hiding, and as he bent over to enter, I plunged the rigid five inches deep into the small of his back. As suddenly as it entered, it withdrew. He fell to the ground and lay reposed at my

feet. I had done it! It was over!

Just at that moment, the moment at which I had experienced the joys of success intermingled with the sorrows of sin, a gust of wind swept the alley and I heard the small rear door to the gas station spring open. I spun around, acting only on the emotions of instinct, to stare into the huge, magnified eyes of a gruesome, shapeless man. I could see nothing but those eyes, those misproportioned, bulging eyes. The lone source of light was a blinking sign hanging from the far wall of the station. At each blink, I saw the unshapely, ghastly eyes, magnified thousands of times by the thick lenses on his glasses, staring, unmoving, directly at me.

My first reaction was to run. Where, I didn't know, but I had to run. My legs were paralyzed. They wouldn't move. After a seemingly endless moment of tormenting fright, I regained my senses and knew he had seen me. A witness to my "perfect crime". Of all things, a witness. I could not let one person stand between me and distinction. I must rid the world of the one impediment standing in my path. I ran to the door, ripped it open, stepped in, and slowly closed it behind me. Where had he gone? There was no sign of life whatsoever. Was this horrible moment only an illusion brought on by guilt or had I actually seen him and had he



escaped by means of another entrance? I listened. There was a slight leak in the roof and the only sound that could be heard was the dripping of the rain through this crack and into an empty oil can, beating out a pulsating rhythm of terror.

I heard a slight noise and spun around to see a minute hubcap bolt bouncing its way down a small flight of stairs leading to the grease pit. All was silent save only for the maddening cadence of the dripping. Another slight sound alarmed me to a point of hysteria. I reeled about and my eyes fell downward to see his lumbering, distorted shadow silhouetted against the greasy floor. He was no less than twenty feet away, slowly feeling his path between the racks of oil cans and batteries. The light continued its blinking and I again saw those crossed, disfigured, monstrous eyes now approaching me rapidly. I drew the bloodstained opener. I could not do it again. I turned and ran to the door, pushing, shoving, blasting it until my shoulder had lost its feeling with pain. My only exit was barred. The latch was wedged and would not give an inch. I saw him now, coming towards me faster than before. There was one small chance of escape that still remained between us, the shallow canyon of the grease pit. If only he didn't see it.

Fifteen, ten, five feet . . . he lunged forward, groping wildly

for something on which to attach his huge hands. I raised the knife as I felt his iron-like fist crash against the side of my face and send me to the floor. It was too late. He had it now, clutched tightly between his meaty fingers, swinging those long, muscular arms that failed to reach their target, and then . . . he disappeared. I heard his head smash against the sides as he stumbled into the gaping mouth of the pit, five feet below me. An agonizing groan and all was silent.

I slowly pulled myself along the greasy floor 'till I had reached the spot at which he fell. I could see his black frame moving and breathing no longer, his glasses still on his face but shattered to bits, and the weapon, my weapon, lying limply in his right hand.

I raised my aching body from the floor and with the little strength I still possessed, broke the lock that had held me only minutes before. The rains were undisturbed by all that had just happened and continued pounding their indentations into the earth around me. As I began my walk home I realized that this more perfect than any human being could have planned in a million years. Yes, the mystery could easily be solved. They had the weapon, they had the killer, and crime just committed had been they had a witness, a dead witness. It was perfect; it was absolutely perfect—but how long would it last?



# City Cousins

by Donald Ranly

The worst thing my aunt could do after she got married was to move to the city. Well, that she did, and still worse for me, she and her husband reared a family of ten. If you were even slightly surprised at the number, you will pass out when I tell you that nine out of these ten were boys, the other obviously, a girl. The saying goes, "Boys will be boys," but if these were boys, I would like to resign my position as one of them.

My dad's farm was not a large one. It consisted of about ninety acres, with a woods, a pond, a creek, and everything else that makes a farm a paradise. I loved it, every acre of it, and every animal on it, including Caspar, the bull.

Have you ever imagined what lions would do if they were let loose on the Zoo grounds after being penned up for a year? Perhaps I am lucky, but at any rate, I never had to *imagine* it. The incident occurred annually right on my dad's farm.

It usually happened on a bright, sunny Sunday afternoon, the one afternoon in the week when there were innumerable pleasant things to do. The bridge in our lane and our collie never failed to warn us that visitors were upon us. The sight of a '41 Chevrolet, overweighted, was all

I needed to know that a miserable afternoon awaited me.

The car stopped and out they piled. They went in every direction, while I stood there unable to move. One or the other of them said, "Hi," but no more. It was obvious from the start they hadn't come to see me, but rather to use our wonderful farm as a big wonderful playground. The barn, chicken house, hog stable, machine shed, woods, creek—all were invaded. There was no ticket booth standing in front of them; all was free.

I felt like crawling in a hole. But, there was no escape, for then it was that mother gave me that look which said, "Watch them."

Completely disgusted, I began the rounds. Why didn't these city kids stay in the city? Yes, they were my cousins, but, well, gee whiz!

My first stop was at the barn. I made up my mind not to get excited. After all if these kids hadn't enough sense to—Gad! Was I seeing things? There right before my eyes Dave was riding the bull. "Get out of there!" I screamed.

"Why?" he asked, in a manner fit to kill. "He likes it."

Dave was the first human being to go into the same pen with Caspar since the bull was two

weeks old.

Tommy was carrying oats by the bushel to the horses. "Do you want to kill them?" I exploded.

"Don't you ever feed these guys?" came the answer. "They're starving."

I knew it was useless to try to explain that a horse will eat oats until it kills itself, so I merely locked the oats bin. "Where's Glenn?" I asked.

"Upstairs."

I put myself into high gear. I reached the top step and saw Glenn sitting on the edge of the hay chute. "Look," he said, "a slide," and down he went.

Seven stitches sufficed to close up the cut in his forehead. That was the least that could have happened. With a chill running down my spine, I remembered that on that particular morning I had hung up the pitch forks instead of letting them lie in the chute.

I strolled over to the hog stable and saw Larry throwing rocks at the pigs. In the middle of each pen there lay a huge pile of corn. This was the first time I had ever seen pigs refuse corn. They were too full to grunt.

The chicken house was next on the route. To my utter despair, I saw that all of the chickens were outside. We had just moved the pullets to the laying house, and now they would all have to be caught again. I was consoled only by the fact that we had only

three hundred that year.

While I was there, I decided I might as well collect the eggs. Billy was very helpful. If a chicken were in the nest, he'd grab it by the neck and yank it out. In one nest, he found one very small egg.

"Must I let this one grow a while yet?" he asked.

"No, that'll do," I said. I didn't even laugh.

My question was always the same. How could city-kids be so stupid? My mother's answer, "They just don't know any better," somehow never quite satisfied me.

The time for milking had come. None of the nine would ever miss that. For the second time, Caspar had a visitor; this time, he was approached with a milk bucket. Whenever I wasn't looking, one of the boys was trying his luck to produce a squirt from one of the cows. Since our cows were trained to be milked on the right side, the boys never failed to try it on the left and to merit a cream-sized kick.

And on and on. When the time finally came for them to leave, I felt like a cowboy making his last round-up. This was usually the hardest task of them all—to get them back into the car. When it was finally accomplished, they were asleep before the motor was warmed up, and I went straight up to bed.

*Alumni Essay Award, 1954*



*Drama  
In  
3-D*





by  
John  
Good

**S**ELDOM does one have the chance to see as really great and sumptuous a production as has been staged by the Old Vic Company with their revival of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The production very ambitiously attempts to combine the three art forms of the play, the ballet, and the symphonic synthesis. Yet it is for this largeness of scope that the venture has been so often unfavorably criticized. Actually the production has succeeded in no mean way to bring to the audience the true spirit of the fantasy of Shakespeare.

The music, by Felix Mendelssohn, was written, not with any particular performance in mind, but simply as the composer's reaction upon first reading the play. He made no attempt to follow the story of the play, but merely concerned himself with picturing the three groups of characters in the play—the fair-

ies, the lovers, and the "mechanicals." The music, inspired as it was by the play, captures for the listener the temper of the play. The freedom with which it is put together also allows the orchestral arranger to give the work some of the traits of the individual production without losing any of the feeling of the composer.

The play itself is one of Shakespeare's most delightful comedies and one of the greatest fantasies ever written. There are even those critics who hail it as Shakespeare's greatest play, as did Chesterton:

The greatest of Shakespeare's comedies is also, from a certain point of view, the greatest of his plays. . . There is a sense in which the play is perhaps a greater triumph of psychology than *Hamlet* itself. It may well be questioned whether in any other literary work in the world is so vividly rendered



a social and spiritual atmosphere. . . *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a psychological study, not of a solitary man, but of a spirit that unites mankind. The six men may sit talking in an inn; they may not know each other's names or see each other's faces before or after, but a night of wine or great stories, or some rich and branching discussion may make them all at one, if not absolutely with each other, at least with that invisible seventh man who is the harmony of them all. That seventh man is the hero of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

THE particular characteristic of this play is that it deals with three different types of characters—the mortals, the "Mechanicals," and the immortals. The mortals are the noble class, concerned with the problem of love; the mechanicals are the rude peasant, working class faced with the duty of presenting a play for the marriage festivities of their king, Theseus; the immortals are the inhabitants of fairy land who come to bless the marriage.

It is here that the ballet proves its effectiveness, by using the dance to show a complete difference between the mortals and the ethereal characters. The airy lightness of the ballet itself lends

itself fully to the delicate nature of a fairies' character and allows for a whole range of nuances in interpretation.

Thus the production easily becomes a *drama in 3-D*. The separate dimensions of the music, the play, and the ballet combine to give the production an unusual effect of a whole in an even more dramatic manner than the new forms of projection that are being exploited across the country in movie palaces.

Considering the actual mechanics of staging, there is one term that is everywhere evident—*sumptuous!* This is indeed the word for a work which required a DC-6A cargo plane to import from Britain 42 actors, 60 musicians, 28 dancers, 13 tons of scenery, and even 267 pink ballet shoes. "Extravaganza" would equally describe the play if this term were not so closely related in the mind of the American audience to second-rate movies having no particular plot but budgets of seven digits.

The scenery itself was a study in what can be achieved in developing a sense of depth and in giving the effect of grandiose pomp on the stage. The costumes perfectly complemented the set. Heavy velvets served to distinguish the mortals, billowy net and translucent materials the fairies, while dull and coarser cloth was the mark of the "mechanicals." The very designs of



*Oberon squeezes the liquid from the magic flower into Titania's eyelids. (Act I, Scene III)*

the costumes seemed likewise to be studies—studies in the effective drape of materials in the case of mortals, in the appropriate use of straight lines for the mechanicals,” and in the creation of an airy effect for the immortals. Showing no drape at all, the cleverest costume of them all was the athletically brief one worn by Robin Goodfellow.

DURING the play's engagement at the Chicago Civic Opera House, there were faults in the presentation indeed, and most of the critics panned the play. Unfortunately the actors had been unprepared for the large size of the American theatres, and their projection was sorely in need of improvement. Nevertheless, the show must have been delightful in the close and familiar atmos-



phere of an English theatre, the size of which never reaches the immense proportions that are characteristic of the "wide open spaces" of the American play-house.

Another problem faced by the company was the fact that all the art forms involved had originally been conceived for individual presentation. It was therefore understandable that there would exist some overlapping. The most obvious was in the show's timing. There was a rather annoying halt in the show between scenes two and three, during which time the orchestra played the introduction to Mendelssohn's music, thus creating the impression that the first two scenes were merely a lengthy prologue.

Again, whenever the fairies made an appearance, the timing was upset by the *corps de ballet's* having to take time out to dance an introduction. The choreography, though beautiful in itself, gave the audience the effect of a loss of continuity.

Usually a director cannot plan such a production as this because he is forced to choose between dancers or actors. However the theatre today is privileged to have two excellent dancers who are

also accomplished dramatic artists—Moirá Shearer and Robert Helpman. Although critics like the mighty *Chicago Tribune's* Claudia Cassidy claimed that Miss Shearer danced as though her proposed retirement from ballet had been retroactive and that she and Mr. Helpman could not be heard beyond the "sixth row center," their performance was on the whole enjoyable, especially if one were familiar with the play.

The most delightful performances of the show, however, were presented by two of the less consequential characters of the play, but characters who are nonetheless enjoyed by audiences of all ages—Bottom and Robin Goodfellow (Puck), interpreted by Stanley Holloway and Philip Guard. Bottom's part as a "mechanic" with his head changed to that of an ass was most entertaining, as was his rendition of the hero of the play-within-the-play. Puck tripped, danced, and frolicked across the stage as though he were enjoying the whole show to the extent that he wished it would never come to an end. Because of his character, it will never come to an end for many who saw this production.

# A MONK'S LAMENT

A delusion of confusion  
Is this world in its transfusion.  
As it circles round the sun.  
Hear the pealing and the squealing  
Of the cars as they go reeling  
Through the town.  
Oh, the wearing and the tearing  
Of the ball upon the bearing  
Of a two-ton truck.  
The clutter and the sputter  
Of a two-wheeled putter  
Is unbearable to hear.  
Hear the squeaking and the creaking  
Of an iron-horse seeking  
To be heard.  
See the shiver and the quiver  
Of the boat upon the river  
'Neath the bridge.  
The prattle of the cattle  
Is unheard above the rattle  
Of a four-motored bird.  
Hear the clatter and the chatter  
Of people as they spatter  
Through the rain.  
Hark the tumbling and the mumbling  
As the thunder goes a-rumbling  
Through the clouds.  
Heed the whirl and the swirl  
Of the wind as it twirls  
Through the trees.  
List the gloom and the doom  
Of the drum as it booms  
Without end.  
See the screaming and the beaming  
Of the child as it comes streaming  
Out of school.  
Even in my cell  
I cannot escape the hell  
Of the clanging and the banging  
Of an ever-ringing bell.

■ by Donald Ranly



# medley

## SHIFT TO SHAFT?

During its residence at Collegeville, *Measure* has been a great many things to a great many people: it has been looked upon by some as a poor man's *Atlantic Monthly*, by others as a haven for previously unpublished term papers, and by a few as a literary scooter for up-and-coming students writers. There are as many opinions about *Measure* as there are people who have bothered to analyze this student magazine.

Many are prone to criticize the magazine for failing to fulfill its purpose—a purpose which in many cases is misinterpreted by its critics. A true understanding of what *Measure* is would therefore be beneficial.

Few will dispute that *Measure* is and should be a student publication, written by students. It is surprisingly rare when the editor has to fill out rejection slips for manuscripts eagerly submitted by professionals. In this respect our hollowed journal has remained true to its station in life.

Admittedly however, there is one aspect often neglected. A student magazine should be written *for* the students. Whether or not it is at once apparent, *Measure's* policy patriarchs should spend at least a fleeting moment considering the desires of the student for *his* magazine. The reader, therefore, should be the yardstick of the content of the magazine.

Many students volunteer their desire for the improvement of *Measures*: why not convert it into a Collegeville counterpart of the U of I's *Shaft*? There is much that can be said for this proposal, and one can with little effort imagine gleefully some of the possibilities. But to be perfectly frank, *Measure* by its very nature is a literary magazine and is not supposed to provide humor in quite the same fashion as *Shaft*; similarly one shouldn't criticize *Shaft* for failing to "degenerate" into a campus literary journal. What does this prove? Merely that each magazine has its own definite purpose and its own defined field of operation (although in this case it would perhaps be better to allow the experienced reader to determine the place and purpose of *Shaft*.)

by the editor

It also proves that *Measure* should not be measured by standards which are outside its scope, since it is primarily a literary magazine and by literary standards should it be judged.

The student unfamiliar with the potentialities of a truly good literary magazine is often prone to judge it as pathetically intellectual, devoid of all traces of humor. On the contrary a good literary style enhances humor and gives its permanence. The farce is soon forgotten, but true humor is much more enduring. Humor should therefore feel quite at home in *Measure*.

As mentioned before, *Measure*, or any literary magazine, is a student magazine written *for* the student. As such it should therefore have something of interest for every student. Naturally every article can't appeal to every student, since only the most thoroughly well-rounded individual would appreciate everything. There should, though, be something for everyone.

If any change is noted in *Measure* this year, it is therefore not a shift to *Shaft*, that is, a lowering of literary quality; it is, however, a result of a fuller realization that the purpose of this magazine is to be a measure of the student body and should consequently present material from many fields of interest, not just those commonly associated with matters literary.

## SHORT STORY

The case of the "unsanforized pants," to quote the phrase from the *Miami Hurricane*, is losing ground on northern campuses with the approach of winter, but north or south it was a dilly while it lasted. Look for the revival of the Bermuda shorts question next spring, although some campuses may try to skirt the whole issue.

In some coed colleges there promises to be a battle of the sexes because of administrative decisions about when and where the shorts may be worn. In most cases the girls feel they are getting the short end of the deal, because their Bermuda shorts are usually classified as slacks by the faculty and therefore are subject to slack restrictions. In the case of male Bermuda shorts—even shorts have gender—many institutions have failed to make any distinction between shorts and other lengths of men's attire. The girls assert that they are being discriminated against because of such inequality. However most feminine displeasure on the matter shrinks down to the fact that they think they look much better in shorts than the usual knobby-kneed, bow-legged male.

Male Bermudites might well ask themselves: Boys like to see girls in shorts, but are girls as favorably disposed to view undraped male legs?



## CONCISE CRITIQUE

In its review of the recent motion picture "Phfft," *The New Yorker* reached another milestone in its goal for to-the-point headlines—"Pfffuui."

## ADS A LA MODE

"Eat it, George. Eat your cereal before it gets crispy."

"But I don't like Soggies."

"Dear, how do you expect to get y o u r all-purpose, year-around, gold-miner's g e i g e r counter if you don't accumulate enough box-tops."

With slight variation this scene is enacted daily over Soggie-laden breakfast tables throughout the country. What began as a mere get-the-kids-interested-in-Soggies type of promotion stunt has boomed into a postman-wrecking mail-order enterprise rivaling Montgomery Wards, if not in gross sales, at least in volume. The advertising moral to be extracted from this situation is that there's gold in them there Soggies' box-tops. But apart from the kiddies' gadgets, what appeal is there for the more mature breakfaster on a typical cereal box? The untapped billboard space on these boxes is pregnant with possibilities.

The average citizen who is more or less set in his breakfast habits and preferences spends at least ten minutes a day staring

subconsciously at the waxy wrapper on the Soggies box. Excluding a two weeks' vacation period when breakfast habits often change radically, this seemingly unimpressive ten minutes per day amounts to exactly 3500 minutes a year or fifty-eight hours and twenty minutes a year spent gazing at and memorizing the thiamine and riboflavin content of Soggies. Imagine the potentiality of an advertising medium that can claim that attention of a reader for two and a half complete days a year!

If advertising can creep into the hitherto unbeaten tracks of the *Reader's Digest*, why therefore can't it profitably slink onto the Soggies wrapper. In place of statistically dull thiamine content, why not a "I dreamt I was a bowl of Soggies in my . . .?"

## FEMININE LAMENT

I think that I shall never see  
A boy refuse a meal that's free;  
A boy whose thirsty eyes aren't  
fixed

Upon a drink that's being mixed;  
A boy who won't forever wear  
Some socks that aren't quite a  
pair;

A boy who looks at girls all day  
And figures ways so he won't pay.  
Boys are loved by gals like me  
Cause who would want to kiss a  
tree?

## GEORGEOUS GEORGE

Chalk up another one for the Great American Midwest, home of McCarthy and Jenner and Halleck, home of the lady who said Robin Hood was a Communist and should be stricken from our books, home of the harassment of great institutions like the University of Chicago and Ohio State by state loyalty commissions and of the attack on Girl Scouts by the big, bad American Legion.

Add to the list the fact that in October, the Indiana State Athletic Commission decided to require a non-Communist oath of all professional boxers and wrestlers on the grounds that "the state has no business sponsoring the public appearance of Reds." *Daily Tar Heel* (University of North Carolina)

## DISAPPEARING DIGIT

Did you read recently that in the near future the fifth and smallest toe of man's foot will be a thing of the past? Scientists have predicted that before long the little toe will go the way of its predecessors, the tail and the tonsil. Apart from any sentimental attachment one might have for this little toe, it is certainly not hard to imagine what revolutionary-like changes its absence would have on our way of living.

The prime blunt of the blow will undoubtedly be felt by the shoe industry. While it is conceivable that certain types of the more loosely fitting moccasin or sandal might be reconditionable, one might well shudder to think of the effect on the noble institution, toeless shoes for women. One more optimistic member of the shoe industry announced to a closed meeting of the Board of Directors of a leading shoe manufacturing firm that all, however, is not lost. He proposed that the industry immediately concern itself with the task of sewing up the holes in the toes of women's shoes, suggesting perhaps the use of mink in the better shoes. For the ladies who prefer not the soothing sensation of mink at the toe of their shoes, he suggested an alternative: women can learn to spread out their toes to fill in the area previously apportioned to the little member of the foot.

Mr. Sid Grauman, of cement-laying fame, immediately had a contractor draw up plans for the erection of a shrine over the sidewalk in front of his Hollywood theatre. In years to come Grauman's Chinese Theatre would assume the hushed atmosphere of a museum of natural history, where parents could spend Sunday afternoons showing their offspring what might have been their fate, had Mother Nature not wisely stepped in at the right time.



# A Philosophical Robber • al greto

JOE thought the movie had been true to life, and as he made his way down the isolated street, its theme was clear in his mind. There are two kinds of people in the world, leaders and followers. Joe was determined to be a leader. He was going to the university to make the necessary contacts at State to enable him to mingle with the right crowd. He had been paid that morning for the past month's work. The \$200, with another \$400 in the bank, was sufficient to make it at State for a year.

Thoughts of getting away from the desolate neighborhood he called home had been creeping into his mind since he was fifteen. For two summers the disgruntled youth worked, saving every penny to achieve his dream of a college degree. In three short weeks, a new life would begin.

As he turned the corner, he suddenly felt a hard object being shoved into his ribs and a low voice was telling him to raise his hands. Joe did as instructed.

"I'm afraid you picked on the wrong guy, mister. All I have on me is a couple of Washingtons in my right front pocket."

Undismayed the robber reached into Joe's back pocket and pulled out his wallet. Opening it, he said, "That's a pretty old trick,

sonny. There is a least fifty here.

Joe could hear the voice counting—100 . . . 150 . . . 180.

With a desperate lunge he went for the gun, but the thug was too quick. He had stepped back and brought the gun down in a perfect arc. Darkness descended on Joe. When he finally did awaken, the gunwielder was gone and Joe's wallet with him.

Three days passed and still Joe could barely touch his food. A small package had arrived addressed to him, and, wondering from whom it came, he tore it open. In it was his wallet and all his money. A note was also attached.

Dear Joe,

I noticed from several cards in your wallet where you live. I also read the letter of admission from State. I got to thinking about it and decided you could put the money to better use than I. I, too, had the ambition of attending college. Like most boys I wanted to be a leader—to do things my own way. This can be a chief cause of trouble. There is a time to lead and a time to follow. It isn't easy to know when to lead. The various religions prove that. They all can't be right. Somebody was leading when he should have been following. I hope higher learning will enable you to determine when to lead and when to follow.

# *Creations*

*by*

*Capp*

*by Joseph Kneip*



Deep within the very heart of the bluegrass state of Kentucky, hidden among the foothills of the majestic Cumberland Mountains, sleeps a peaceful little village. A score of roughly-constructed shacks are scattered about the foot of Onnecessary Mountain, sheltering a group of easy-going, devil-may-care mountain folk, definitely members of the lower class south.

These people worry little about politics, war, and the various and many troubles of the world, but rather, form the issues of their day from the success or failure of the turnip crop or the latest scandal at Kissin' Rock.

Though practically inaccessible by automobile or airplane, this village has recently and repeatedly been visited by more than 50,000,000 Americans who have come to know and love its populace: The Scragg Family, the Widder Brown, the Hawkins Family, Marryin' Sam, the Yokums, and all the other colorful characters that pledge their citizenship to Dogpatch, U. S. A.

First incorporated on August 13, 1934, the village of Dogpatch was a creation, not of the state of Kentucky, but of the pen of one of America's greatest cartoonists, Al Capp. Since its birth, it has grown under the watchful eyes of the American public, not in size or population, but in popularity and reputation, until now it ranks with New York, Los



Angeles, and San Francisco as one of America's most famous cities.

Though somewhat of a backward town lost in the shuffle of progress, the hamlet of Dogpatch can boast of one industry and one railroad.

### From Dogpatch to Eternity.

Millionaire industrialist Stubborn J. Tollivar owns and operates the Po'kchop Railroad Line that runs from Dogpatch to eternity. Tolliver built the impractical line circularly around Onnecessary Mountain to satisfy a boyish ambition of his son. Each week one train moves up the track and, except when switchblocks are installed, topples backward down the mountain killing all passengers.

The Skonk Works, located near Skonk Hollow, is the town's leading and only industry. Here concentrated skonk oil is brewed and barrelled for the surrounding countryside.

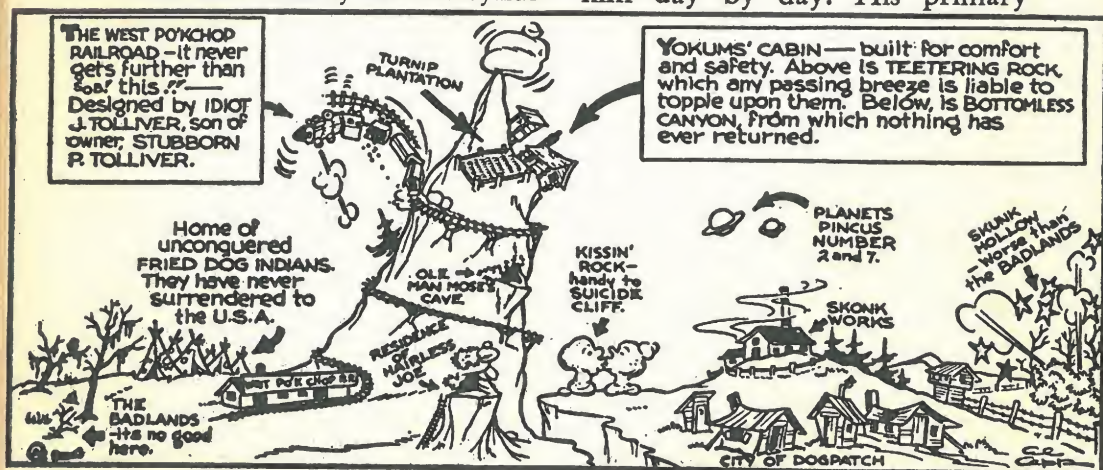
The first family of this syndi-

cated society of mountaineers are the Yokums (who would be highly indignant if they knew their family name was bred from the combination of the words yokel and hokum).

Mammy Yokum, a most extraordinary individual who can wash, cook, conjure up a vision, and lick her weight in wildcats on successive days, is the spark-plug of the family. Her driving ambition and limitless energy are second only to the love for her son Abner.

A walking, talking, though seldom-thinking contradiction, Li'l Abner resembles a hulking football player, complete with bulging biceps, gigantic shoulders, and extra large feet.

The over-sized feet seem to be the only characteristic passed on to Abner by the elder Yokum, affectionately known as Pappy, who seldom speaks, and seems happy with the life sketched for him day by day. His primary



form of entertainment is an occasional raid on the preserved turnips.

Within the past 30 months, the Yokum family embraced one new member and then another, and there is the promise of more to come.

Abner, as is fitting for a male of his age, took himself a wife, or rather, was taken by Daisy Mae, one of Dogpatch's prettier belles, a marriage climaxing a long, adventurous courtship, and seriously disturbing the lives of at least half of the strip's millions of readers.

**Enter Honest Abe.** Approximately a year later, one Honest Abe Yokum first smiled up at his proud parents and in succeeding weeks managed to create crisis after crisis in the fashion of a true Capp-created character.

Two other members of the Yokum clan, though not an outspoken pair, have played important roles in the adventures of Li'l Abner. Salomey, an intelligent, well-fed, and dearly beloved pig has found a permanent home with the Yokums, as has the Dogpatch ham, a fabulous piece of pig that miraculously, year after year, provides food for all demanding Yokums without losing either its flavor or its bulk. It can easily be seen how such a culinary device somewhat compensates for the poverty in the Yokum homestead by supplementing their traditional diet of po'k chops and

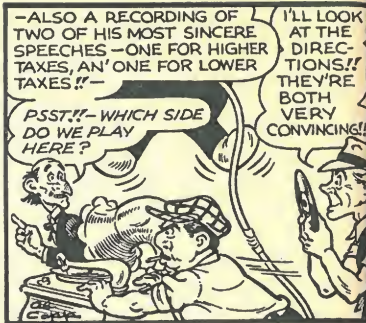
applesauce.

True Abner fans can call to mind such other characters as Adam Lazonga, the world's greatest lover, Ole Man Mose, the cave-dwelling prophet of terrible predictions, or Sadie Hawkins, and her famous race for a husband which is now observed in over 3000 colleges in the United States. Many can remember the evil Scragg family, father and two sons, who, in one instance, burned an orphan home to the ground to provide light for the reading of their comic books, only to find that they couldn't read. Two other leading Dogpatch citizens are Hairless Joe and Lonesome Polecat, who annually brew the town's supply of Kickapoo Joy Juice, that potent liquid that can, at the first sip, cause the heartiest Dogpatcher to rise into the air, stiff as a frozen codfish. These characters, and a hundred others, have leaped from the brain of Al Capp into the lives of the Yokums, creating the uncountably humorous situations which have become the trademark of the Li'l Abner strip.

Alfred Gerald Caplin was born in New Haven, Connecticut on September 28, 1909. His father entered and failed in several businesses both before and after Capp's birth, and consequently the family moved several times during his early life.

By the time he was eleven years old, his talent for cartooning had





already become evident, and he was soon engaged in drawing and selling comic strips to the neighborhood children.

His adeptness at cartooning, however, was contrasted by his poor scholarship, and it was only through great effort that he made his way from grade to grade. At Bridgeport High School in Bridgeport, Connecticut, he failed geometry for nine consecutive terms.

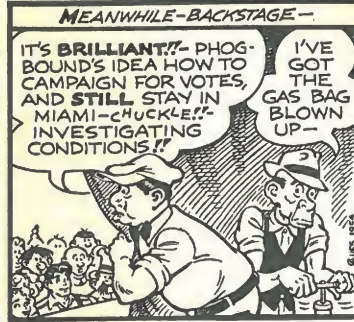
**Exit Mr. Gilfeather.** After trying a few institutions of higher learning in the east, Capp enrolled in art school where he met Catherine Wingate Cameron. The two were married in a short time, and Mrs. Capp was forced to return to her home in Amesbury, Massachusetts, because of the couple's lack of finances. Shortly after this, the twenty-year-old Capp, now a family man with responsibilities, went to seek his fortune in New York City. He succeeded in landing a job there and was given an already established comic strip to draw. The strip, entitled *Mr.*

*Gilfeather*, soon went from bad to worse, and after a few months, Capp himself admitted his failure.

After a period of odd jobs and depression, Capp found work as assistant to Ham Fisher, the originator of the *Joe Palooka* strip. He remained with Fisher for several years, and it was during this time (1933) that Li'l Abner's predecessor, a large, robust, hill-billy character named Big Leviticus made a brief appearance in the *Palooka* strip.

Both Capp and Fisher have since claimed this character to be their own, and a bitter feud still rages between the two over the actual creation of the Abner-like character. Fisher has repeatedly accused Capp of stealing the original idea of Li'l Abner, and Capp vehemently denies this.

Capp signed his first contract with United Features Syndicate Service in the summer of 1934, and on August 13 of that year, Abner and his family first appeared in eight subscribing newspapers. The strip was an immediate success and subscriptions



mounted rapidly. Today the strip can be seen in more than 400 daily newspapers and over 500 Sunday papers in the United States. This popularity has made Capp the happy recipient of a \$300,000 a year income. He is one of the few cartoonists who owns his strip outright.

Capp considers his drawing serious art believing the comic strip is the most beloved and popular way of telling a story. As proof of this he points to the rabid, almost fanatical following that comic strips enjoy. The most significant art of the 40's, according to Capp, was the comic strip, preserving the ideas of the year for the historians. And though he regards himself as a story teller rather than an artist, he writes less than 50,000 words a year.

**Enterprising Teetotaler.** A teetotaler, with a tremendous appetite, Capp throws himself wholeheartedly into his work. The schedule drawn for himself and his two assistants, expressed in his own words, is "Work for a

week in Boston (where the strip is created); then come to New York for a week and collapse."

To completely understand either Capp or Abner, the reader must follow the conventions of the artist that nothing is entirely good, entirely straight, entirely bad, and that everything is a little ridiculous.

Li'l Abner is primarily a humorous strip. It is one of the few so-called comic strips that depend on humorous incidents rather than adventure for appeal. Capp's drawings are a friendly satire on American people, American customs, and the American way of life.

Contrary to the belief of many readers, Capp has little knowledge of southern customs or of Kentucky mountaineers, their language or way of life; he visited the region only once when he was in his middle teens. He creates his own language and customs and, therefore, need not worry about errors in these matters. Abner speaks as Capp wants him to speak and is unaccountable for



grammatical or social blunders. The language, the customs, the adventures, the satires, (particularly the satires) are all Capp originals.

One of the greatest contributions to the popularity of the strip is made by the resemblance of its characters to persons living or dead. This resemblance is purely intentional. And the greater number of Capp's characters are modeled after Americans in public life.

Shortly after the star of Liberace shot across the entertainment horizon, a fopish, platinum-topped piano player appeared in the strip. Though Capp's creation played without the aid of candlelight, the name he carried, Loverboynik, allowed no doubt of the implication.

**No George?** Yet Capp insisted that Loverboynik was not the popular pianist, "because he can play the piano quite well and doesn't giggle hysterically." Capp also added. "I don't think Loverboynik is as funny as Liberace."

Abner himself, by the author's own admission, was modeled after the stage and screen star, Henry Fonda, as he appeared in early roles. But over a period of years, the lock of unruly hair, shy smile, and the idealistic attitudes that typified presidential candidate Henry Wallace became evident in Abner.

Long-legged and bosomy now, Daisy Mae has constantly chang-

ed appearances since she first met Abner. The original model was an obscure secretary of an Associated Press editor. Daisy then, in quick succession, mirrored Madeline Carroll, Veronica Lake, and opera singer Lois Eastman.

Marryin' Sam, a staunch advocate of the ten dollar wedding, which in his case means a production of Barnum and Baily proportions, officiates at the end of every Sadie Hawkins Day Race. This volcanic gentleman that united Abner and his bride in wedded bliss, inherits his hat, chin, nose, and protruding waistline from New York City's famous former mayor, Fiorello La Guardia.

The stern looking face on one end of a box of Smith Brothers cough drops has set the pattern and provided the facial features for Silent Yokum, one of Abner's distant relatives. Neither has spoken for many years, and relatives of the two families hold out little hope that they will begin speaking in the near future.

**A La Jane Russell.** Other predominant Dogpatch citizens easily recognized in the flesh-and-blood world are Moonbeam McSwine, who boasts the curves, features, billowly black, and "Outlaw" costume of cinemactress Jane Russell; Adorable Jones, the man no female can resist, is bestowed by Al Capp with the round face, figure, cigar, and hat of Winston Chur-

chill; Earthquake Mc Goon, an expansive hulk of muscle, is proportioned similar to the famous wrestler, Man Mountain Dean; and even Lazonga the lover has the appearance, acid tongue, and dominant personality of George Bernard Shaw.

Sad to say, two of Capp's more popular feminine characters, Sadie Hawkins and Lena the Hyena, are too ugly to represent anyone. Because of her lack of beauty, Sadie seems hopelessly bound to her annual November chase over the hills of Dogpatch pursuing a would-be husband. Yet, homely as Sadie might be, she couldn't begin to compare with Lena's (gulp) appearances.

In 1946, Capp sent Abner to lower Slobberia to marry the world's ugliest creature, Lena the Hyena. For months, the clever Capp kept Lena blocked out of the panels, creating almost unbearable suspense. When Lena finally confronted Abner and the American public, her face was obliterated by a placard bearing the words:

To the reader:

In printing this comic strip, the editor of this paper reserves the right to delete any material written or drawn, which, in his judgement, is too terrifying, depressing, or nauseating for family readership.

**Daisy's Dilemma.** In an ingenuous and financially successful byplay to this incident, Capp

collaborated with a friend in writing a song pouring forth the distress of Daisy Mae, who had been left behind in Dogpatch. The song was published and plugged by such celebrities as Kate Smith, Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Fred Waring, and Danny Kaye. Within the panels of the strip, Abner finally learns of Daisy's pleadings on the Kaye program and returns without Lena. Record sales for the song exceeded 50,000 copies.

Not only does the famous cartoonist sketch his characters from famous people, but many well-known personages turn up within the city limits of Dogpatch. Orson Wells became Orson Wagon for one episode. Columnist Drew Pearson, described by Abner as an "amachoor pinchhitter for Ole Man Mose," appears as a rocking-chair-bound Drusilla Pearson.

Former Postmaster General James Farley once left Washington and, prodded by Capp's ever-moving pen, climbed Onnecessary Mountain to deliver mail to the Yokums. Mammy even graced the White House with a surprise visit to the late President Roosevelt.

In the satirical vein, Capp brought an emaciated version of Frank Sinatra into his strip, and Sinatra loved every word of it, as did John Steinbeck when a somewhat altered version of his *Grapes of Wrath* highlighted



the strip. But in satarizing Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, Capp barely averted a lawsuit.

One of the more famous and more controversial satires of Capp was aimed at the United States Senate, represented by Senator Jack Phogbound. Because of this satire, the Abner strip was criticized spasmodically throughout the nation and was actually dropped by the editor of the Pittsburgh Press for two weeks.

**Fosdick vs. Shakespeare.** It is not unusual for a writer to borrow another writer's device, and Capp proceeded to a classic source to do his borrowing. Upon Shakespeare's idea of a play within a play, Capp developed in Fearless Fosdick a comic strip within a comic strip, and has presented to the public his greatest satire. The never-erring, usually perforated Fosdick closely mimics the *Dick Tracy* strip of Chester Gould.

With protruding chin held high, Fosdick, following his razor-sharp proboscis, slices his way through adventure after adventure, constantly thwarting the efforts of the monsters of the underworld, while occasionally chanting his now famous and profitable (for Capp) advice, "You better get Wildroot Creme Oil Charlie."

The men behind the scenes, Capp and Gould are casual acquaintances, and no hard feelings have developed over the satirical strip. Capp, in his own words, is a "hell of a Dick Tracy fan."

Even in the light of his numerous heroic feats in fighting crime, Fosdick's greatest claim to fame was the part he played in the Abner-Daisy Mae nuptials. Fosdick, for years, had been Abner's "ideel." Fearless moved from case to case invincible to death and even more important, invincible to Cupid's barbs. Violently pur-



LONESOME POLECAT



SALOMEY and PAPPY YOKUM



MAMMY YOKUM

sued by Prudence Pimpleton, Fosdick twisted and turned, dodged and ducked, and always managed to slip the marriage knot. The resemblance between the Fosdick-Pimpleton affair and the Abner-Daisy Mae affair soon became evident even to the occasional reader.

**Clodhopper Love.** So entranced with the heroics of Fearless, and so overcome with awe at the great detective's sterling character and righteousness, Abner, one black and forboding day, took an oath to follow Fosdick loyally and repeat his every action. Daisy, on learning this, rushed to Fosdick's progenitor, Lester Gooch (here Capp is satirizing Tracy's creator, Chester Gould), and arranged to have the hapless Fosdick marry the everpresent Prudence. Fosdick's marriage shortly appeared in the papers, and Abner, doomed by his own oath fol-

lowed his hero into the marriage state, in the last week of March, 1950. Thus, Daisy's 18-year chase of her clodhoppered love ended with Marryin' Sam pronouncing the eternal words.

Reactions, both violent and contrasting, rocked the United States from coast to coast. Mail flooded the United Features office. And the question everybody asked was "Would Abner stay married?" Several times previous to the Fosdick betrayal, Abner had been led to the altar only to be rescued dramatically by Capp at the last moment. With the strip still in its second year, Marryin' Sam had convinced the elder Yokums that they couldn't afford to turn down a bargain price of six dollars for a ten dollar wedding, and Abner, with a youthful Daisy Mae at his side, heard the words said over him. Fortunately, Sam's license had ex-



MOONBEAM McSWINE



DAISY MAE



pired.

Abner was later forced into a marriage with the Widder Grubble, but Mammy found the Widder's lost husband and rescued her son. Still later, an irresistible dancer, masquerading as Daisy, seduced Abner into marriage only to have the wedding annulled when her fraud was discovered. Only a few years ago, Composer Skelton McCloset poisoned Daisy to provide inspiration for his "Seranade to a Dying Blonde." Abner, about to grant Daisy's dying wish that he marry her, is once again rescued, this time by the infamous Kickapoo Joy Juice, a shot of which miraculously cured the dying blonde.

Yet in the days following the latest marriage, no flaw could be found in the contract. Abner and his readers alike waited for a miracle to set him free. But no miracle came. Instead, Capp issued



L'L ABNER

the statement that Abner's bachelorhood had come to an end.

No one, not even the carefree, impulsive Capp, would make such a move without reason. Shortly after the war, Capp, as a humorist, felt a change in the laughing habits of the American people. His creation of the Shmoo in 1948 had loyal readers chuckling throughout the land, but left Capp buried under a deluge of criticism.

**Subversive Shmoo.** The Shmoos first made their appearance in August of 1948. They were probably the most affectionate animals known to man and rivalled the Dogpatch ham in economic value. These lovable little pearshaped animals laid neatly-packaged Grade A eggs and bottled milk. They multiplied without effort, when boiled came out steak, when fried tasted like chicken, and at a hungry look in their direction, would drop dead from sheer joy. Critics of Capp in attempting to read between the panels immediately saw in these delectable morsels an intentional undermining of United States labor and big business.

A year later, an animal somewhat Shmooian in appearance, the Kigmy, frolicked about the Dogpatch hills, begging to be kicked. The cartoonist introduced this animal which loved to be kicked, so people would stop kicking themselves around. Immediately, Capp was accused of

upholding pacifism and recommending non-resistance to Communism.

Considering the two incidents of the Shmoo and the Kigmy and the resulting cries of disapproval and the accusations hurled at him, Capp saw that the people had all become humorists in that they were all kidding themselves. Realizing then that his satires would only evoke more trouble, he decided to return to complete fantasy, to the fairy-tale type happenings that had popularized the original *Li'l Abner* strip.

And what incident could better initiate the return to fantasy than the marriage of Abner. Unlimited possibilities unfolded with such a marriage. Would there be children? Would Abner be forced to get a job? Where would the two live? Could there be in-law trouble? The idea became irresistible to Capp, and Daisy got her man.

What new adventures will arise to plague this union can only be known by Capp himself. One

new Yokum had already arrived. It seems only natural that the family will continue to grow. One thing, however, is certain. Whatever the developments may be, they will be viewed by an increasing number of Americans that find *Li'l Abner* to be a pleasant momentary escape from reality.

For twenty years, Capp has captivated the reader of comics with his art, wit, and satires, until now Abner and the rest of the Yokums have become as much a part of the American scene as the po'k chops and applesauce they so love.



Mr. Capp





# On Tea

The time has come, we English say  
To speak of many things  
Of snaps and snails  
And puppies tails  
And drinks that brewing brings.

The world has watched our English race  
Because we stop at four  
To sip and bite  
And be polite  
And curtsy when we pour.

Our famous drink, we English think,  
Has taste of such degree  
That none compare  
Or even share  
The lasting fame of tea.

But lo, fate dooms our English race  
And cracks our pots of tea;  
The one to blame,  
We all exclaim—  
Our friends across the sea!

Such crafty ones, those Yankees are,  
They've caused so much ado  
By bagging it,  
And tagging it,  
And ruining our brew.

—JOSEPH BARNETT

*Sterling by Gorham*  
*China by Haviland*  
*Teabag by Lipton's*



# STRANGE ACCOMPLICE

ERNEST Erp had decided. His wife would die tonight. For several months he had planned every detail of the murder. Tonight was the night of the perfect crime.

Ernest worked as a technician and part-time announcer at radio station WCBY in Lincoln, Oregon. The station was small, and the majority of its programs were transcriptions of network programs. Ernest, however, had a two hour program every night from ten o'clock until midnight during which he played popular records. On Saturdays the night engineer did not work, and Ernest was left to operate the station alone. This was Saturday night. Ernest was beginning his program.

While the first record was playing, he went to his record files and removed two fifteen minute transcriptions. He carefully placed each of these on a large record turntable. By this time the record had come to an end. Ernest made a few comments about the weather and started another record playing. He then set the transcription turntables so that when the first transcription had ended the second would begin to play.

Now the stage was set. Ernest was waiting for the cue he had

rehearsed a thousand times in his mind. The minutes crept by until the big red clock on the wall said it was 10:45. Now Ernest reached over and started the first transcription turntable. The label on the transcription read, "Fibber McGee and Molly-January 28, 1947". Who would believe that such a transcription would be an accomplice to a murder? And yet it was, for issuing from the radios of several thousand listeners was the voice of Ernest Erp previously recorded for this sinister deed. Several thousand people would bear witness to the fact that Ernest Erp had broadcast his full two hour program on the night that someone had murdered his wife.

Ernest moved swiftly, for there was much to be done in a short time. He took one last glance at the meters and dials on the rear wall to assure himself that the transmitter was still functioning properly. Now out the door, down the back stairs and into the alley he ran. He leaped into his car and drove rapidly through the noiseless overcast night, keeping to the many unlighted side streets and dark alleys to avoid detection.

The moon struggled to break the bonds of the cloud-chained sky to witness the promised per-

fect crime while Ernest sped through the night. Finally, the car slowed and stopped in the alleyway behind his house. The time was 10:53. Ernest took a pair of gloves and a keen two-edged knife from the glove compartment. He put on the gloves and entered the house through the rear door.

Quietly now, for his wife would be asleep, he climbed the stairs and entered her bedroom. With only a momentary hesitation, he struck at her throat with the knife. She tried to scream, but was no longer capable of doing so, and the cry only bubbled in her throat. Ernest waited until the spreading red stain on the bedclothes spread no more, and then returned to the car. The time was 10:58.

HE put the gloves and knife in a paper bag and put the bag on the floor of the car. As he started the car he switched on the radio. He tuned in station WCBY and strains of "Shake, Rattle and Roll" filled the car. This was the time when the first transcription should end and the second should start. "Shake, Rattle and Roll" ended and Ernest heard himself say, "That was Bill Haley and Haley's Comets with 'Shake, Rattle and Roll'. Now we'll have a time out for station identifica-



tion." There was a second's pause and then, "This is station WCBY in Lincoln, Oregon, and this is Ernie Erp with a pile of platters for your evening enjoyment. Our next disc is the ever popular 'Stardust' by the Ames Brothers; I'll play it as soon as I say a few words about our sponsor."

The transition had been perfect.

Ernest suddenly stopped the car. He had forgotten to rid himself of the paper bag with the knife and gloves in it! He stepped out of the car and dropped the bag into a nearby sewer. Once in the car again, Ernest looked at his watch. The time was 11:05.

He drove the rest of the way to the station exulting in the

knowledge that all he need do to have committed the perfect crime was to return before the second transcription ended. As he parked the car in the alley behind the radio station, he breathed a deep sigh of relief. He still had five minutes left.

He decided to listen to the radio for a moment.

"That was Les Paul and Mary Ford with their rendition of 'Smoke Rings'. Now it's time for our waker upper tune of the evening and here . . . ning and here . . . ning and here . . . ning and here . . . ning and here . . ."

A look of consternation flooded across Ernest's face. The needle had stuck.

